

## The Beginnings of the United Nations



**SS.912.A.6.9** Describe the rationale for the formation of the United Nations, including the contribution of Mary McLeod Bethune.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **resolve** (ri zolv) *v.* to settle or find a solution to; **promote** (pruh moht) *v.* to encourage or support

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### The United Nations

The League of Nations had lacked the power to stop the aggression that led to World War II. In addition, the United States had not been part of the League of Nations. Many Americans, looking at the causes and course of World War II, became convinced that the American policy of isolationism was partly to blame. To prevent future wars, the United States would need to look outward, not inward, and to cooperate with other nations. In addition, many people felt that the time had come to understand the causes of war so that they could work to prevent future wars from occurring.

When The Big Three (President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin) met in Yalta during February 1945, the establishment of an international organization to encourage cooperation among world powers was one of the principle issues discussed. Franklin Roosevelt had already used the term United Nations to describe the twenty-six nations allied against the Axis Powers. Now it was to be applied to a world organization. The Big Three scheduled the first meeting of the United Nations to be held April 25, 1945 in San Francisco.

Through negotiations, it was decided that the United Nations would have a General Assembly and a Security Council. The General Assembly would be made up of all the member nations. The Security Council would be made up of the major allies from World War II (the United States, Great Britain, USSR, France, and China) as well as seven members elected from the General Assembly. (This number was later increased.) The leaders agreed that any one of the powers with permanent membership on the Security Council would be able to veto any important Security Council decisions.

The purpose of the United Nations was to prevent another global war by resolving conflicts between countries. The UN was also founded to provide aid to countries in need, assist refugees, and promote human rights. When the United Nations convened in San Francisco, the United States was one of 50 nations represented. Mary McLeod Bethune was one of three African American consultants to the United States delegation. Bethune was an educator and the first African American woman to head a department of a federal agency. She was involved in developing the United Nations Charter.

At San Francisco, the delegates wrote the United Nations Charter, which was ratified by the member nations in October 1945. The Charter commits the member nations to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights." The UN also issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

**Check for Understanding** What five nations were established as permanent members of the UN Security Council?

## The Early Years of the Cold War

**FL SS.912.A.6.10** Examine causes, course, and consequences of the early years of the Cold War (Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, NATO, Warsaw Pact).

**Vocabulary Builder:** resume (ri z00M) *v.* to restart or return to

When World War II came to an end, large parts of Europe, Japan, and China lay in ruins. The Allies were faced with the difficult task of deciding how to rebuild much of the world. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945 and the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the leaders of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union had already begun to make plans for a postwar world. They agreed to divide Germany temporarily into four zones: American, British, French, and Soviet. They also agreed to hold free elections in some countries in Eastern Europe.

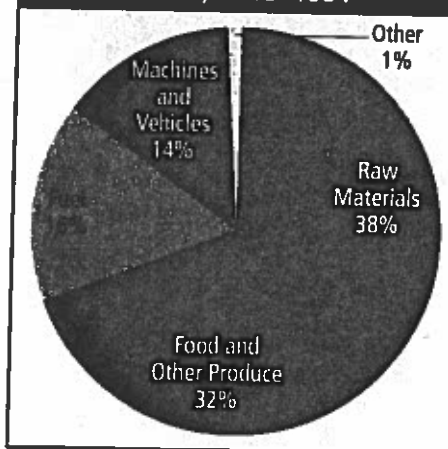
### The Issue of Germany

After the war ended, the Allies followed through with part of their plan. The Soviet Union occupied, or controlled, the eastern part of Germany, as well as most of Eastern and Central Europe. France, Great Britain, and the United States occupied the western part of Germany. However, Stalin, the Soviet leader, went back on his promise to hold free elections in Eastern Europe. He also refused to give up control of the Soviet zone in Germany. This led to the partition, or division, of Germany into two separate countries: West Germany and East Germany. After a few years of occupation by American, British, and French forces, West Germany resumed self-government, as a democratic nation. East Germany remained under Soviet control and became a communist country. The Soviets also backed communist parties in other countries in Eastern Europe and helped them take control of the governments in those countries. These countries became known as Soviet "satellites," because they "orbited" around the Soviet Union like objects in space revolve around a larger object.

### Rebuilding Europe

The United States worried that poverty in Western Europe might open Western European countries to the influence of communism. To strengthen the democratic governments in those countries, the United States poured billions of dollars into Western Europe through a huge aid program called the Marshall Plan. The program provided food, fuel, and money to those countries. The United States also offered aid to the Soviet satellite countries in Eastern Europe, but Stalin would not let them accept it. The economies of Western Europe slowly began to rebuild. West Germany eventually became one of the world's leading industrial powers and a strong ally of the United States.

Shipments Financed by the Marshall Plan, 1948–1951



**Check for Understanding** Why was Germany divided into two separate countries after World War II?

## Origins of the Cold War

**FL** **SS.912.A.6.10** Examine causes, course, and consequences of the early years of the Cold War (Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, NATO, Warsaw Pact).

**Vocabulary Builder:** **respond** (ri SPOND) *v.* to react; **maintain** (meyn TEYN) *v.* to keep or enable to continue

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The Soviet Union and the United States had been allies during World War II. After the war, however, distrust between the two countries led to the Cold War, a struggle between the two countries that stopped short of armed, or "hot," war. The Cold War lasted for 45 years, from the end of World War II until the Soviet Union finally collapsed.

The Cold War was not just a conflict between two countries. It was also a competition between two very different value systems. The United States is a democracy, with a generally free market economic system. It also places a high value on individual freedom. The Soviet Union was a totalitarian government with a communist economic system.

### The Truman Doctrine

President Truman and other world leaders worried that the Soviet Union wanted to dominate the world. By 1947, there were signs that this was true. Countries outside Eastern Europe, like Greece and Turkey, were under pressure from communist movements supported by the Soviets. President Truman decided that the United States could not allow communism to spread any further. He promised that the United States would provide aid to nations struggling against communism. This policy became known as the Truman Doctrine. It was based on the idea of containment, or keeping communism within its existing borders. This policy did not try to roll back communism where it already existed, but it resisted communist aggression into other countries. It became a guiding principle of American foreign policy during the Cold War.

### NATO and the Warsaw Pact

In 1949, the United States, Canada, and ten countries in Western Europe formed an alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. The purpose of the alliance was to prevent a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. NATO members agreed that an attack on one of them would be considered an attack on all of them. When West Germany became a member of NATO in 1955, the Soviet Union responded by forming the Warsaw Pact, a similar agreement between it and seven communist countries in Eastern Europe. NATO and the Warsaw Pact maintained large military forces facing each other in Europe for nearly 50 years.

## Origins of the Cold War (continued)

### Communist China

Europe was not the only part of the world where communism was gaining ground. Before World War II, a civil war had been raging in China between two parties, the Communists and the Nationalists. During World War II, the Communists and the Nationalists joined forces to fight the Japanese. As soon as the war was over, however, the civil war resumed. The Communists defeated the Nationalists and set up the People's Republic of China, a communist country. One third of the world's population was now communist.

At first, the United States refused to recognize the People's Republic of China as the official government of China. The communist takeover in China increased Americans' fears that communism might eventually dominate most of the world. However, China and the Soviet Union were not strong allies. Although the Soviet Union had supported the Communists in their fight to take control of China, China and the Soviet Union eventually competed for territory and diplomatic influence. Under President Nixon, the United States would drive a wedge between China and the Soviet Union by recognizing the People's Republic of China and establishing diplomatic relations with it.

### The Nuclear Arms Race

In 1949, U.S. officials learned that the Soviets had set off a nuclear bomb. This led to an arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. Soon, each side had enough weapons to destroy the other. This threat made Americans and Soviets uneasy for the rest of the Cold War. To discourage any nuclear attacks by the Soviets, the United States under President Eisenhower adopted a policy of "massive retaliation." This meant that the United States would threaten to use crushing force, and even its nuclear weapons, if it or its allies were threatened.

**Check for Understanding** Why was the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union after World War II called the "Cold War"?